

Message Text

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SUBJ: VIEWS OF VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT ON PRESENT TRENDS IN THE
UNITED STATES-VENEZUELAN RELATIONS

1. AT DINNER LAST NIGHT AT THE PRESIDENTIAL RESIDENCE, CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ WAS FAR FROM RETICENT IN HIS COMMENTS ON DEVELOPMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES. HE TAKES A DARK VIEW OF CURRENT TRENDS AND EXPRESSED A FRANK FEAR THAT A DOWNWARD ECONOMIC SPIRAL IN THE UNITED STATES WOULD HAVE UNFAVORABLE REPERCUSSIONS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. HOWEVER, HE RESOLUTELY DENIED THAT THE ACTION OF VENEZUELA AND OTHER OPEC COUNTRIES IN HIKING UP THE PRICE OF PETROLEUM HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH SUCH A DOWNWARD TREND.

2. I REGRET TO REPORT THAT PRESIDENT PEREZ TAKES AN EQUALLY DIM VIEW AS TO PRESENT LEADERSHIP IN WASHINGTON AND THAT IN FACT HE SEEMS TO REGARD THE UNITED STATES AS A STRICKEN GIANT. I TOLD HIM THAT I HAD ONLY THAT VERY NOON IN A PUBLIC SPEECH BEFORE THE VENEZUELAN-AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE REBUTTED A SIMILAR COMMENT MADE BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER. I HAD TOLD MY AUDIENCE THAT THE UNITED STATES IS STILL THE MOST POWERFUL AND ENLIGHTENED COUNTRY IN THE WORLD, AND THAT ANYONE WHO IGNORED THE REAL POWER AND POTENTIAL OF THE UNITED STATES, TEMPORARILY HAMPERED BY TRANSITORY DIFFICULTIES, COULD DISPLAY SUCH IGNORANCE ONLY AT SOME PERIL.

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I REPEATED TO THE PRESIDENT WHAT I HAD TOLD MY AUDIENCE

AT NOON, THAT "DIPLOMACY IS THE EXPRESSION OF NATIONAL STRENGTH IN TERMS OF GENTLEMANLY DISCOURSE"; AND THERE IS STILL AN ABUNDANCE OF U.S. NATIONAL STRENGTH AROUND THE WORLD.

3. THE PRESIDENT, WHO WAS AFFABLE THROUGHOUT BUT SPEAKING WITH EXTREME CANDOR AS "FRIEND TO FRIEND," REPEATED THE FAMILIAR CANARD OF THE SECRETARY'S SUPPOSED SUBLIME INDIFFERENCE TO LATIN AMERICA. I REPLIED THAT SURELY IN HIS OWN RECENT EXPERIENCE HE HAD EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY. WITHIN THE PAST MONTH THE SECRETARY HAD RECEIVED PEREZ'S MINISTER OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, DR. PEREZ GUERRERO, AND AT THE END OF JANUARY HAD GIVEN A SPECIAL AUDIENCE TO THE RECENTLY APPOINTED VENEZUELAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. IT SHOULD THEREFORE BE KEPT IN MIND THAT NOT ONLY WAS SECRETARY KISSINGER INTERESTED IN LATIN AMERICA IN GENERAL BUT IN VENEZUELA IN PARTICULAR.

4. THE PRESIDENT EXPRESSED SATISFACTION AT THE SECRETARY'S FORTHCOMING VISIT TO VENEZUELA AND AT THE PRELIMINARY TRIP OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS. AS INDICATED IN CARACAS 2136, HE FOUND MARCH 15 A SUITABLE DATE UPON WHICH TO RECEIVE ROGERS.

5. THE PRESIDENT IN BEMOANING CURRENT DIFFERENCES IN VIEW BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND LATIN AMERICA (E.G., THE TRADE ACT OF 1974), TRIED TO ASCRIBE THESE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION TO AN EXAGGERATED PLAY BY THE AMERICAN PRESS. I SAID THAT ON THE CONTRARY IT WAS SOMETIMES DIFFICULT TO GET THE AMERICAN PRESS TO PUBLISH ANYTHING ABOUT LATIN AMERICA, BUT THAT WHEN EVEN A TWO-LINE STORY DID EVENTUALLY APPEAR, IT WAS BLOWN UP OUT OF ALL PROPORTION BY THE VENEZUELAN PRESS TO THE BENEFIT OF NEITHER COUNTRY.

6. THE PRESIDENT WENT ON TO COMPLAIN THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO TALK IN CONFIDENCE TO AMERICANS WHO CALLED ON HIM BECAUSE IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER APPEARED DELIBERATE LEAKS TO THE PRESS. HERE (CARACAS 1354) HE CITED OUR LAST MEETING WHEN I HAD PRESENTED DR. JAMES THEBERGE AND THE PRESIDENT HAD INDICATED THAT PERHAPS IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE FOR AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE SHLAUDEMAN TO DEFER HIS ARRIVAL

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HERE BY A FEW WEEKS. THIS STATEMENT, WHICH IN FACT WAS ACCURATE, WAS ALMOST INSTANTLY LEAKED TO THE PAPERS IN WASHINGTON AND HAD THE CUSTOMARY REPLAY HERE.

7. AS FOR SHLAUDEMAN'S CONFIRMATION AND EVENTUAL ARRIVAL IN CARACAS, THE PRESIDENT REPEATED THAT THE AGREEMENT HAD BEEN GIVEN, ADDING THAT IN FACT TO REFUSE A REQUEST FOR AGREEMENT WOULD BE TANTAMOUNT TO AN UNFRIENDLY ACT. I TOLD HIM THAT ON

THE BASIS OF WHAT I HAD RECENTLY HEARD IT APPEARED THAT AMBASSADOR
SHLAUDEMANN WOULD BE CONFIRMED BY THE SENATE AND WOULD PRESENTLY
TAKE HIS OATH OF OFFICE.
MCCLINTOCK

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